

MIDDLEWICH AND THE GREAT WAR

DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

the Government were concerned about the state of the food stocks, now that it was apparent the War was going to continue for some time. Once again directives came from the relevant ministers to all the local authorities as follows:

- A 4lb loaf would now be a 3 ½lb loaf which cost 8d
- A 2lb loaf would now be a 1 ¾ lb. loaf
- A rise in the price of milk of 25% (at present milk was 4d per quarter)

Old money was very different to today's values, but I have used the modern equivalent in ()'s to give some form of value to illustrate the price increases, 1d equals £1.14, 1 shilling equals £13.71 and £1 is £314.80.

Cheese rates in 1915 were 6½d per lb. (£7.43), as advertised by a local retailer Mr R Holland, "selling 'good sound cheese' at a special rate".

In the first year of the great War

food prices at the markets had been rising steadily over the past 18 months, e.g.: Eggs 4 for ½ d (57p), Butter 2/- to 2/2d per lb. ((£27.43 -29.71); chickens 3/- to 5/- each (dressed) (£41.14 - £68.57); Beef 1/- to 1/8d per lb. (£13.71); mutton 1/- to 1/8d per lb. (£13.71); Potatoes 10/- per cwt. which is 112 pounds, (£137.14).

Immediately after the outbreak of war,

all gold sovereigns and half sovereigns were withdrawn and replaced with paper money, which were £1.00 and 10/- notes, the population called them Bradburys. John Fredrick Bradbury was then the permanent secretary to the treasury. He was born in Winsford and when he became a peer he called himself Lord Bradbury of Winsford.

Food provision was difficult, Middlewich documents show problems with labour shortage, which was the main but not the only problem. Middlewich like other townships at this time still used horses for transport both on Canal and Road. The trains were limited and with the government commandeering horses and feed, plus blockades on shipping we soon found ourselves in a problematic situation.



Due to government controls and the battle for labour in farming and transport, a rise in food prices was inevitable.

It caused people to hoard food and turn to growing their own, keeping livestock so the results were variable from a country town like Middlewich with available land and space to cities such as Manchester. Government responded with price controls on staple foodstuffs, and launched a series of propaganda notices about managing food stocks and recipes that for the first time altered the way people used various ingredients.

The consumption of food for this category of households was largely made up of: Bread, flour, milk, butcher's meat, sugar and vegetables. Less popular or affordable during war time was syrup, cocoa, coffee, Margarine, tinned meat, sausages, biscuits and cake.

By 1918 controlled retail prices, meant a rise in Bacon and ham to 28d a lb. (£15.32), butchers meat to 15.5d (£8.75). Colonial cheese 9d per lb. (£5.47), Pineapples are more affordable at 1 shilling! £6.56! Food prices vary according to research documents and generalisation of food pricing. Knock on effects on foods such as wines are due to the lack of socialising and dinner parties, plus it was seen as an un-necessary extravagance. This created a dramatic fall in the trade.

RATIONING

Finally in the summer of 1918 Britain introduced rationing.

Bread was very hard to get because of the ingredients, other recipes existed brought out by the Ministry for food in 1916 but were not wholly successful.

New foods on the market developed during the war were dried power foods, enabling the general population for the first time to just add water to enjoy soups, custard and eggs.

Pre-war a 4lb loaf was 5.5d by 1917 it was 12d (£8.15 in today's money)

Other items had fixed prices in 1917:

Sugar	7d per lb.	(£3.83)
Milk	5d per quart (2 pints)	(£3.39)
Butter	30d per lb.	(£16.41)
Margarine	12 to 14d per lb.	(£7.66)
Tea	32d per lb.	(£17.51)

There was no food control over fruit and veg, so the prices fluctuated greatly and so did the impact depending on access to home grown land. Meat priorities were given to men, particularly serving and 'starred' men.

In 1918 Sugar, meat and cheese were added to the new rationing scheme.

- Sugar 8 oz. per person
- Marg & butter 4 oz. per person
- Meat rations varied depending on cuts of meat 12d to 16d on coupons
- London and Home Counties were hit with further rationing of Bacon and Ham 4 oz. per person.
- Tea 2 oz. per person.

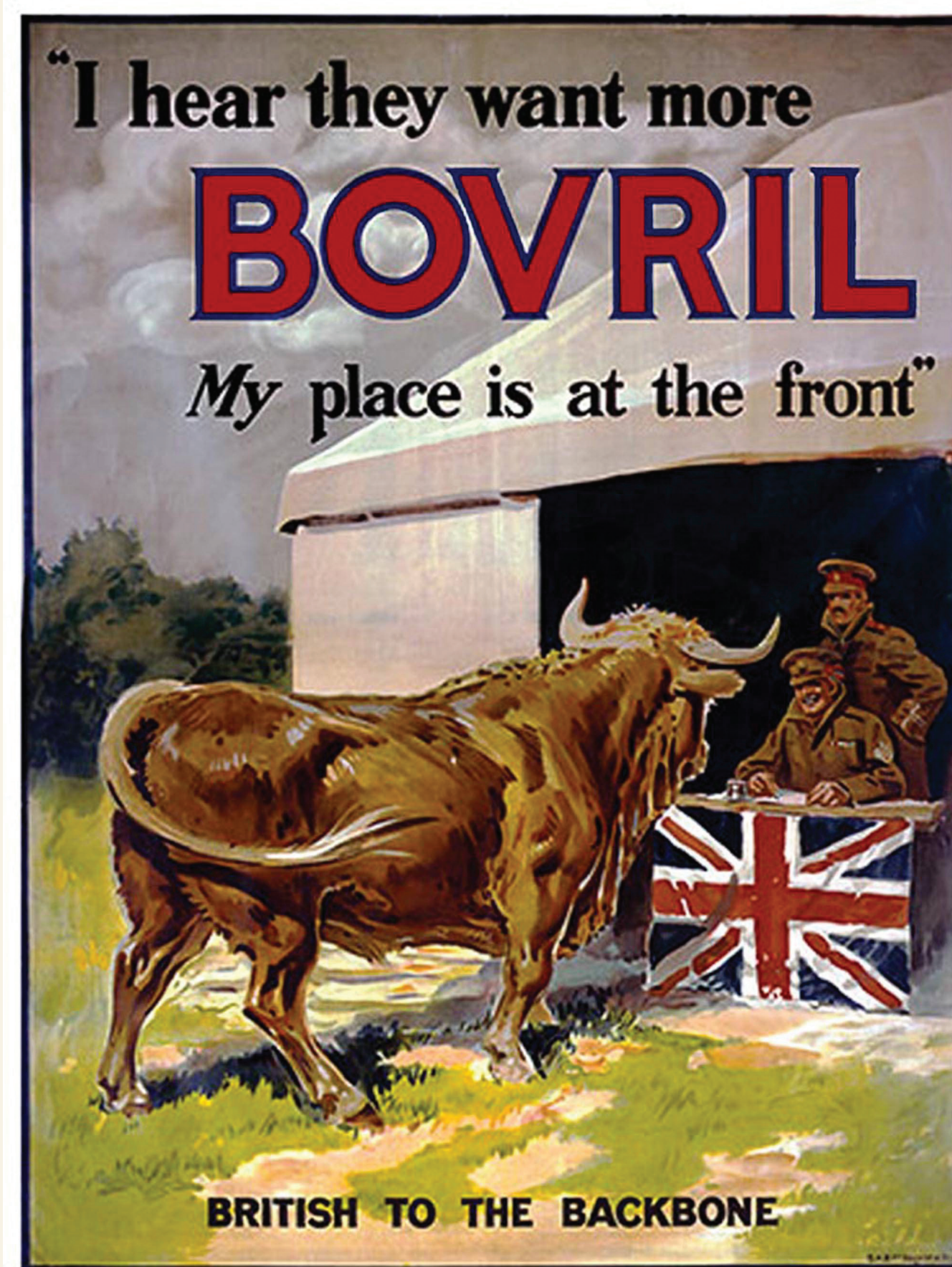
Some local schemes operated for jam but not in Middlewich.

Coal fuel was restricted and it was rationed by the number of rooms in the family home. In Middlewich any fuels that were going spare or still had any life in them at the salt works were used by the locals.

The Ministry of food looked at five categories of controlled Pricing depending on control of the government

- Foods that the Ministry imported
- Foods that the Ministry exercised some control over production and distribution
- Foods Ministry had no control such as home produced foods
- Foods controlled by wholesale
- Foods controlled by retail prices

Most foods we eat today were actually available; although food shortages had hit families hard, no-one in Britain was near starvation.



£204.62 spent on food shopping alone, plus rent, clothes, savings.

If we compare these prices with pre-war information for a family's weekly bill.

An income of £1 per week for supplies translates to £314.80 in today's money!

Bread and flour	3s 6d	£55.09
Meat and dripping	2s	£31.48
Tea or cocoa and sugar	1s	£15.74
Butter and cheese	1s	£15.74
Haricot Beans, Rice and barley	1s 6d	£23.61
Oatmeal for porridge	6d	£7.87
Coal, soap, soda, candles, matches and salt	3s 6d	£55.09

Gazeley, Ian; Newell, Andrew (2010): The First World War and Working Class Food Consumption in Britain, Discussion paper series // Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit, No. 5297

Looking at Semi-skilled working class households, in Middlewich they would see their food expenditures up from 258d per week to 522d per week.



EAT MORE COTTAGE CHEESE

ONE POUND

SUPPLIES MORE PROTEIN THAN

One pound of beef, 12/-
One pound of pork, 12/-
One pound of lamb, 12/-
One pound of veal, 12/-
One pound of fish, 12/-

YOU'LL NEED LESS MEAT

A Postal Card Will Bring Recipes for using this meat substitute

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

COTTAGE CHEESE OR MEAT

ASK YOUR POCKETBOOK